

### Supporting Family Systems: *Families Are Systems*

Use these ideas and questions to build on what you have learned and extend your practice.

#### THINK ABOUT IT!

- **Self-Reflection**  
Use these questions to think about your own practice.
- **Reflect with Others**  
Supervisors, directors, coaches, and teachers/providers can be reflective partners.
- **The Power of Practice**  
Invite a colleague to join you; observe or record each other and share ideas.

#### REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

- How do I actively learn about families? How can my understanding of family systems help me develop better relationships with families in my program?
- How do I learn about a family's boundaries? How do I know when families are more private or open?
- How are a family's rules or expectations different from those of the program?
- What roles do family members take on? Who are the primary decision-makers in the family?
- How do family members in a system influence each other?

#### TRY IT OUT!

Think about a family you would like to know better. Write down two family patterns or dynamics you'd like to understand, such as rules or expectations they have about childrearing.

Make a plan for how you will learn about these patterns:

- Will you observe family interactions?
- Will you ask them directly about particular family dynamics?

#### How Did It Go?

Reflect on what you've learned about a family you've tried to know better. How does this information fit with your previous ideas about this family and their relationships? What ideas are still tentative because you don't have enough information to identify a pattern or characteristic?

#### What Next?

With a colleague, discuss what you've learned. Maintain confidentiality by not using the family members' actual names. How can you use this information to work more effectively with this family? Use the next pack in this bundle, *Building Relationships with Families*, to deepen your understanding of the children and families in your program.